

National Elk Refuge News – April 30, 2007

Boy Scouts Assist with Antler Collection



*A few of the Scouts
show off part of
Saturday's find.*

Saturday brought sunny skies and warm weather, making ideal conditions for the annual Boy Scout antler pick-up on the National Elk Refuge.

Each spring, hundreds of antlers drop to the ground on the Refuge during the “shed” season, which generally occurs during March and April for mature bulls and as late as early May for younger or spike bulls. The antlers are considered a coveted item by many and used for decoration, belt buckles, bolos, buttons, chandeliers, furniture and medicinal potions.

There was a time when the now-prized antlers had little value. In

fact, until the late 1950s, it was standard practice to give antlers to Refuge visitors as a memento of their trip. But as the value of shed elk antlers increased, so did the desire to obtain them, and illegal poaching became prevalent and created an administrative problem for the Refuge. Both antler theft and trespassing on the Refuge are violations of Federal regulations.

Under the supervision of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Boy Scouts were recruited in 1957 to help pick up shed antlers – or “sheds” as they are commonly called – on the Refuge. The Town of Jackson later used some of these collected antlers

to create the Town Square's antler arches, built by the Rotary Club.

Beginning in 1966, the National Elk Refuge assumed the lead on the project and issued a special use permit to the Boy Scouts for the collection of antlers on the Refuge, which first became available to the public for purchase via an annual auction in 1968. The special use permit is issued annually.

Refuge staff start collecting antlers as soon as they begin dropping, in order to discourage poaching and to protect equipment used in farming and supplemental feeding. The Boy Scouts choose one Saturday each spring to help with an additional patrol of the 24,700 acre Refuge, returning any found antlers to a secured storage facility where they will later be sorted by similar sizes and colors, bundled into various sized lots, weighed, and tagged. This prepares them for the public auction which is held each year on the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend.

Approximately 125 people showed up for Saturday's work day, including both Scouts and Scout leaders. The group spent a full morning out on the Refuge, winding up the day with a hot dog roast.

For more information on the antler auction and an ElkFest schedule of events, click on the "Events" link at www.jacksonholechamber.com.



Some of the antlers required team work to carry out.



Several Cub Scout packs scoured the marsh areas near Flat Creek.
